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An EXPLANATION OF THE ROMAN CATHOLICK'S BELIEF:

Concerning the principal Points Controverted.

Charitably offered to all moderate Persons.

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By Franc. à S Clara 4

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BIBLIOTHECA · BODLEIANA

I. *Of the Scripture.*

WE believe the Holy *Scriptures* to be of Divine inſpiration and infallible Authority; and whatſoever is therein contained, we firmly aſſent unto, as the Word of God, the Author of all Truth.

But ſince in the Holy Scriptures there are ſome things hard to be underſtood, which the ignorant and unſtable wreſt to their own deſtruction; we therefore profeſs (for the ending of Controverſies in our Religion, and ſetling of peace in our Conſciences) to ſubmit our private Judgements to the Judgement of the Church, repreſented in a Free General Council. 2 Pet. 3. 16.

II. *Of the B. Trinity. Of Prayer to Saints. Of Images.*

WE humbly believe the ſacred Myſtery of the *Bleſſed Trinity*, one Eternal, Almighty, and incomprehenſible God,

whom onely we adore and worship, as alone having Soveraign Dominion over all things, to whom onely we acknowledg as due from men and Angels, all glory, service and obedience, abhorring from our hearts (as a most detestable Sacriledge,) to give our Creators honor to any Creature whatsoever.

1 Tim. 1. 17.

And therefore we solemnly protest, that by the Prayers we address to *Angels* and *Saints*, we intend no other than humbly to sollicite their assistance before the Throne of God, as we desire the Prayers of one another here upon earth; not that we hope any thing from them, as original Authors thereof, but from God the Fountain of all Goodness, through *Jesus Christ*, our onely Mediator and Redeemer.

Neither do we believe any divinity or virtue to be in *Images*, for which they ought to be worshipped, as the *Gentiles* did their *Idols*, but we retain them with due and decent respect in our Churches, as instruments, which we find by experience, do often assist our memories, and excite our affections.

III. *Of Justification. Of Merits.*

WE firmly believe, that no force of nature, nor dignity of our best works can

can merit our *Justification*, but we are justified freely by *grace*, through the Redemption that is in *Jesus Christ*. Rom. 3. 24.

And although we should by the grace of God persevere unto the end in a godly life and holy obedience to the Commandments; yet are our hopes of eternal glory still built upon the mercy of God, and the merits of *Jesus Christ*.

All other *merits* (according to our sense of that word) signifie no more, than Actions done by the assistance of Gods grace, to which it has pleased his goodness to promise a reward; a Doctrine so far from being unsuitable to the sense of the Holy Scriptures, that it is their principal design to invite and provoke us to a diligent observance of the *Commandments*, by promising heaven as the Reward of our obedience, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. Godliness is profitable to all things, having the *promise* of this life, and of that which is to come, And *Rom.* 2. 8. God will render to every man according to his deeds, to them, who by patient confidence in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. And again, *Rom.* 8. 3. If you live after the flesh you shall dy, but if through the spirit you mortifie the deeds of the body, *you shall live.* And *Heb.* 6. 10. God is not unjust to forget your work

and labour of love, which you have shewed for his name, &c. Nothing being so frequently repeated in the Word of God, as his gracious promises to recompense with everlasting glory the faith and obedience of his servants; Nor is the bounty of God barely according to our works, but high and plentiful, even beyond our capacities, giving full measure, heaped up, pressed down, and running over into the bosoms of all that love him.

Luke 6. 38.

Thus we believe the merit or rewardableness of holy living (both which signifie the same thing with us) arises not from the self-value even of our best actions, as they are ours, but from the Grace and bounty of God; and for our selves, we sincerely profess, when we have done all those things, which are commanded us, we are unprofitable servants, having done nothing but that which was our duty, so that our boasting is not in our selves, but all our glorying is in *Christ*.

Luke 17. 10.

IV. *Of the H. Eucharist.*

IN the holy Eucharist, or most venerable Sacrament of the body and bloud of our Lord: We acknowledge that there are, as in all other Sacraments, two things. The visible

visible sign, which is the forms of bread and wine, to which no Catholick may or doth direct his worship. There is also invisible Grace signified, the body of our blessed Lord, whom being present we adore and worship with all possible reverence and thanksgiving from our hearts for so great a blessing, warranted herein by our blessed Lord himself in each of the Gospels.

V. *Of Communion in one kind.*

WE humbly confess that from the beginning of Christianity, the holy Communion was administred *frequently* in both, and *sometimes* in each kind, according to several circumstances: and hence the holy Church following the piety of Christians, who insensibly became accustomed to receive it almost universally in one kind, upon great motives did afterwards ordain to have it in one, as now it is commonly administred, though the receiving of it so is not matter of faith. Neither do we believe that religious and devout communicants, are hereby bereaved of any benefit or comfort in obeying the Churches orders, since our holy belief instructs us, that our blessed Lord the fountain of all grace is as equally present in one kind as in both. *Trid. Sess. 21. Can. 3.*

VI. *Of*

VI. *Of the Sacrifice of the Altar.*

THe holy Sacrifice indeed of the altar, we clearly believe ought to be celebrated in both kinds, as now it is according to the divine institution, as being done in representation and commemoration of our Lords blessed passion on the Cross, wherein the body and bloud were separated: Whatsoever therefore propitiatory power our holy Religion attributes to this commemorative Sacrifice, it is by virtue of the Sacrifice of the Cross, as being by this applied to us. This is the substance of our faith expressed in the Council of *Trent*, so that still we humbly acknowledg the ground of our salvation to be derived from our Lords blessed and bitter passion.

Luke 22. 9.

Sess. 22. c. 1.

VII. *Of Prayer in Latine.*

WE freely acknowledg that it is no way commanded by the Church, that the people should pray in a language which they understand not, nay, there is given them all possible encouragement to encrease their devotions, and with the Apostle to allure all, if it may be, to continual prayer, (which is the life of our souls) by ordaining

ing and publishing most excellent Prayers in vulgar languages for their use.

As to the Liturgies of the Church which properly belong to Church-men, and therefore were anciently stiled the Priests Books, lest the people should not receive full benefit by their publick use, there is an express command of our holy mother the Church in the Council of *Trent*, that the Pastors and all who have charge of souls, in the very time of divine service, should expound and make them plain to the peoples capacity, as in the old times of the Church we find it was also ordained and practised. *Sess. 5. c. 2.*

VIII. *Of Prayer for the dead.*

OUr faith teacheth us to exercise Christian Charity by humbling our selves before the divine throne of Gods mercy, to beg forgiveness (as we do for one another here upon earth) of the debts and trespasses of those middle sort of Christians, as S. *Augustine* and the Council of *Florence* call them, who had not brought forth sufficient fruits of Repentance, dying in communion of the Faithful; which indigent condition of theirs, relievable by the Churches, or the Prayers of the Faithful surviving, speaks what the ancient call *Purgatory*: warranted herein *In Enchiridio ad Laurentium & de Civ. l. 21. c. 24.*

herein by the practise under the Law recorded and recommended in the *Maccabees*, which being in no sort reprehended by our Lord or his Apostles amongst the rest of the Jews unlawful practises, was and is justly presumed to have been allowed by *him*, as many of the Fathers understood his sermon in the Mount, and by *them*, as is hinted by S. *Paul*: whereupon it hath continued ever since in general practise throughout all ages, as even Gravestones and all other Christian Monuments do witness, especially all ancient Liturgies of the Saints, and Books of common prayers used in all Churches: neither can we discern how possibly this may be conceived offensive to God, whose justice herein we hope and do humbly endeavour to appease by our exercise of brotherly compassion.

Mat. 5. 29. 1 Cor. 15. 29. 2 Cor. 3.

If you should ask how any mans acts can satisfie for anothers faults, since each mans burdens are much too heavy for him without Christs Passion: To this our Holy Religion teacheth us, that there is no Law of God, which assures us in rigour of justice, of Gods acceptance of the acts of another man for my sins, (this was onely the priviledg of the actions of our blessed Lord) yet this hinders not, but that they may prevail by way of suffrage and impetration for our pardon;

pardon; and therefore it is great piety for us to pray for each other, as Holy Scripture and constant practise of Holy Church warrant us.

IX. *Of the Moral Law: Of Obedience to Civil Magistrates.*

WE further do firmly believe, and highly reverence the *Moral Law*, being so solemnly delivered to *Moses* upon the Mount, so expresly confirmed by our Saviour in the Gospel, and containing in it self so perfect an Abridgment of our whole duty both to God and man. Exod. 20. Mat. 19. Eccles. 12. 13.

Which *Moral Law* we believe obliges all men to proceed with faithfulness and sincerity in their mutual contracts one towards another; and therefore our constant Profession is, that we are most strictly and absolutely bound to the exact and entire performance of our promises, made to any person of what Religion soever; much more to the Magistrates and Civil Powers, under whose protection we live, whom we are taught by the Word of God (from whom their power is derived) to obey, not onely for fear, but conscience sake; and to whom we will most faithfully observe our promises of duty and obedience, notwithstanding any dispensation,

on, absolution, or other proceedings of any forraign Power or Authority whatsoever.

Wherefore we utterly deny and renounce that false and scandalous position, that *Faith is not to be kept with Heretickes*, as most uncharitably imputed to our practises, and most unjustly pinned upon our Religion.

X. *Of Ecclesiastical Hierarchy.*

IN Order to our better instruction how to comport our selves in this, and all other occurrences relating to Gods service: We firmly believe, that according to Divine Ordination in the Catholick Church, there is a Hierarchy consisting of *Bishops*, *Priests* and *Ministers*.

He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and other Evangelists, and other Pastors and Doctors, to the consummation of the Saints, unto the work of the Ministery, unto the edifying of the body of Christ: untill we all meet in the unity of Faith, and the knowledg of the Son of God &c. That now we be not children, wavering and carried about with every wind of doctrine in the wickedness of men, incraftiness to the circumvention of error &c. *Eph.* 4.

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These we sincerely and solemnly profess, as in the sight of God, the searcher of all hearts, taking the words plainly and simply, in their usual and familiar sense, without any Equivocation or Mental Reservation whatsoever.

FINIS.